

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 DOTE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 /050 W

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R 161110Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2291

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 0699

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: EXPLOSION IN TRIPOLI PORT

1. IN EARLY AFTERNOON OF JUNE 11, AN EXPLOSION SHOOK THE PORT OF TRIPOLI. ESTIMATES OF CASUALTIES VARY, BUT IT IS CERTAIN THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF PORT WORKERS SITTING IN A NEARBY CAFE WERE KILLED. ONE REPORT FROM A WELL-PLACED SOURCE PUTS THE NUMBER OF DEAD AT SEVEN, AND INJURED AT THIRTY-FIVE. THIS SOUNDS PLAUSIBLE, BUT WE HAVE ALSO HEARD REPORTS THAT AS MANY AS THIRTY WERE KILLED IN THE BLAST. THE PORT WAS CLOSED FOR SOME 60 HOURS AFTER THE EXPLOSION, AND SUBSEQUENTLY MINUTE SEARCHES OF PERSONS AND GOODS ARRIVING AT THE PORT WERE INSTITUTED.

2. THERE HAS BEEN NO MENTION OF THE EXPLOSION IN THE PRESS, AND NO OFFICIAL EXPLANATION, LEAVING THE FIELD OPEN TO RUMORS OF WILDEST SORT. MOST PEOPLE SEEM QUITE SURE THAT SABOTAGE WAS INVOLVED. SOME SAY EGYPTIAN FROGMEN WERE RESPONSIBLE, WHILE OTHERS TALK OF A BOMB DROPPED FROM A HIGH-FLYING PLANE.

3. RUMORS ASIDE, IT SEEMS MORE PROBABLE THAT THE EXPLOSION WAS ACCIDENTAL. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL DEATHS AT TRIPOLI PORT ALREADY THIS YEAR DUE TO CARELESS HANDLING OF CARGO, AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN SIMILAR ACCIDENTS IN BENGHAZI. A CAMPAIGN WAS LAUNCHED

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EARLIER THIS YEAR TO IMPROVE SAFETY AT THE PORT. ALSO, IT IS

HARD TO BELIEVE THAT IF THE EXPLOSION WERE NOT ACCIDENTAL
QADHAFI AND JALLUD WOULD HAVE CONTINUED WITH PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS
OF AMERICAN EVICTION DAY, WHICH SAW BOTH MEN MINGLE WITH
CROWDS UNTIL EARLY THE NEXT MORNING.
STEIN

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